



Trani, (restored 1974-98) on the Adriatic coast of Apulia, southern Italy.

Philippe Chenart and Castles in Cyprus and Italy

In his article on the castle of Kantara in Cyprus, which appeared in the last issue of this journal, Nicolas Morelle drew attention to Filippo Cinardo/Philippe Chenart in the context of his defence of the castle in the siege of 1229-30. After Chenart was forced to leave Cyprus in 1233, he continued to serve his master, the Emperor Frederick II Hohens- taufen (1194 - 1250) in southern Italy and, as Morelle wrote, in 1249, ‘completed’ Frederick’s works at Trani in Apulia on the Adriatic coast.¹ Philippe Chenart is certainly an interesting figure and Morelle’s note about him appears to be the latest in a long line of essays

which touch on Chenart’s place in the ongoing debates of East-West influences in castle design during the period. The question is, did Chenart’s experiences in the East, especially Cyprus, teach him valuable lessons as regards the design of castles which he then used in whatever he did for Frederick II and after him, Frederick’s bastard son, Manfred.

Chenart took over the defence of Kantara when its commander was killed by a crossbow bolt. He subsequently acquitted himself very well in the ten month defence of Kyrenia from June 1232 to April 1233.² By the time the castle was forced to capitulate, Chenart had already been disinherited of his Cypriot estates by pronouncement of the High Court in 1232.³ He withdrew to Italy and worked hard for Emperor Frederick, rising in his service,

¹ N. Morelle, ‘The Castle of Kantara – a key to the evolution of active defence in the 13th century between the Eastern and Western Worlds’, in *The Castle Studies Group Journal* no 28, 2014-15, pp. 284-310 at p. 303.

² J. Petre, *Crusader Castles of Cyprus. The Fortifications of Cyprus under the Lusignans 1191-1489*, (Nicosia, 2012), pp. 19-21.

acquiring estates and attaining comital rank. Under Manfred, Chenart became Admiral of the royal fleet. He died in 1266.⁴ What exactly did he contribute to the development of Frederick's castles, especially in Apulia, in this period?

The debate seems to have been triggered as long ago as 1897 by the French historian, Émile Bertaux who saw Chenart as a castle designer *par excellence*.⁵ In particular, Bertaux believed, or wanted to believe, that it was Chenart who masterminded Frederick's astonishing Castel del Monte, a claim that has subsequently been dismissed by Heinz Götze in his

monograph on the castle.⁶ The reality is that there is precious little evidence to sustain a claim that Chenart did design castles at all. All we seem to have is the epigraph in a masonry plaque in Trani recording that in 1249, work on the defences was completed in accordance to Chenart's plan or project and under the direction of a master of works, one Stefano di Romualdo Carabere. Can this be taken to mean that Chenart designed Trani? If so, was it in any way inspired by what he may have learned as a younger man in Cyprus and the Levant?

Trani is, in essence, a quadrangular castle with rectangular angle towers. The quadrangular form was certainly the favourite in Frederick's works in southern Italy and Sicily in the 1230s and 1240s (though not of course in the case of del Monte) so if Chenart did design Trani, it was to a conventional design by then popular both locally but also in the castle-building world generally.⁷ Chenart knew Kantara and Kyrenia intimately. Mountainous Kantara's design is largely dictated by the rocky eminence on which it is built so prescribes a very irregular *enceinte* but coastal Kyrenia is quadrangular so it is possible that there is a connection here with coastal Trani. However, it would be as well to refrain from making much out of this: there is too little to support the view that Chenart was a master castle-builder and that in such a role he provides a clear link in the exchange of East-West influences.

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³ Chronique d'Amadi, in *Chroniques d'Amadi et de Strambaldi*, ed. R. de Mas Latrie, Collection de documents inédits sur l'histoire de France, 2 vols, (Paris, 1891-3), 1, p. 175.

⁴ É. Bertaux, 'Les Français d'outre-mer en Apulie et en Epire au temps de Hohenstaufen d'Italie', in *Revue historique*, 85 (1904); P.W. Edbury, *The Kingdom of Cyprus and the Crusades 1191-1374* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 66.

⁵ É. Bertaux, 'I monumenti medioevali della regione del Vulture', in *Napoli Nobilissima*, supp. 1897, 4-5; 'Castel del Monte et les architectes français de l'empereur Frédéric II', in *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*, August 1897, p. 432 ff; and 'Les Français d'outre-mer...' (see note 4 above). G. Nitto-de Rossi quickly took issue with Bertaux in 'Una risposta ad Émile Bertaux' in *Napoli Nobilissima*, 1898, p. 129 ff. They could not even agree on Chenart's nationality: he was French for Bertaux and German for Rossi. More recently, Chenart has re-emerged as a likely castle-designer in A. Castellano, 'Proto-mastri ciprioti in Puglia in età sveva e protoangioina', in *Cultura e società in Puglia, in età sveva e angioina (atti del convegno di Studi, Bitonto 11-13 dicembre 1987)*, a cura di F. Moretti (Bitonto, 1989), pp. 263-269, a work subsequently drawn on by A. Divicarro, 'I castelli di Barletta et Trani' in *Castel del Monte e il Sistema castellare nella Puglia di Federico II*, a cura di R. Licinio (Bari, 2001), pp. 113-156: see pp. 141-3. I am grateful to Paolo Forlin of Durham University, Ian MacKay of the University of the Highlands and Islands and Peter Hart for their help with translations.

⁶ H. Götze, *Castel del Monte. Geometric Marvel of the Middle Ages* (Munich, 1998), p. 106.

⁷ Good coverage of Frederick II's castles in Italy and Sicily, notably Catania, Lagopesole, Maniace, Prato and Trani, is provided in D. Libal, *Castles and Fortifications of Britain and Europe* (Prague, 1992), pp. 73-6, 79-80.